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ABSTRACT

Reading and writing are part of the world of children. Most school language arts programs, however, do not help students develop a personal, functional need for being language users themselves. Too often in schools, the purpose of language is to satisfy an external demand and not an internal, expressive, or communicative need. Research in the last 10 years has contributed to the discussion of reading and writing as related processes. There have also been significant contributions by earlier theorists (such as L. S. Vygotsky and L. M. Rosenblatt) who have argued for decades that students compose meaning, whether in reading or writing, in order to create a coherent text from discrete experiences, memories, and associations. Students who are reading and writing purposefully are engaged in making choices. (Thirty-nine references are attached.) (RS)

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The Reading and Writing Relationship: A Case for Confluent Instruction

The 1980's have produced several education documents addressing the issue of reading and writing instruction. Four national assessments in reading published under the title of the Reading Report Card (Educational Testing Service, undated) suggested that the improvement of our national state of literacy must occur by training in higher-order reading skills. Students must learn to develop personal interpretations of what they read and to question and think about the material drawn from their reading experience. On the heels of the Reading Report Card came the Writing Report Card (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1986) which addressed the teaching of writing. The Writing Report Card stated that students must be asked to think about information, organize their thoughts, and express them coherently. According to the report, students at all levels were deficient in higher level skills.

The Reading Report Card and the Writing Report Card followed several other reports, including A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the Carnegie Report (Branscomb, 1986), the Holmes Report (Lanier, 1986), and the Governors' Report on Education (Alexander, 1986). Presented in each document was a discussion of the need for improvement in the instruction of reading

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and writing.

Over 90 years ago a similar report appeared. In 1892, the National Education Association appointed a Committee of Ten to consider what the curriculum of secondary schools should be. The following goals were announced at the Conference on English in 1892 for English instruction in grades one through twelve (Ohman, 1986):

> To enable the pupil to understand the expressed thoughts of others and to give expression to thoughts of his own; and to cultivate a taste for reading; to give the pupil some acquaintance with good literature, and to furnish him with the means of extending that acquaintance. (p. 12)

The report by the Committee of Ten insisted that the two goals of composition and literature "should never be disassociated in the mind of the teacher and their mutual dependence should be constantly present to the mind of the pupils" (p. 12). The position of the Committee reflected the view that the unity of reading and writing was as important 90 years ago as it is today.

One connection of reading and writing discussed in several recent studies (Smith, 1982; Wittrock, 1983) linked the two processes on the basis of meaning construction. Reading was not viewed as receptive and passive, but rather as active and generative. Such a model implied that students are capable and responsible for constructing word and image relationships between what they know and what they read and write. According to Wittrock (1983), reading and writing share important generative processes. Writing involves constructing meaning; reading requires a reconstruction of meaning. It is the understanding of the relationship among the parts of the text and between the text and the learners' own experiences that allows for

meaning construction. Teaching that requires student-generation of relations among these components contributes to comprehending a text (Wittrock & Carter, 1975).

Researchers Tierney and Pearson (1983) supported a similar position. According to these authors, readers and writers draw on their background experiences as they compose a text. There is an on-going negotiation to arrive at meaning. Tierney and Pearson, along with Graves and Hansen (1984) viewed both reading and writing as acts of composing. Learners constructed and reconstructed ideas that reflected the same cognitive process. Frank Smith (1982) contended that the learner actively contributes to the learning process--relating new information to what is already known and finding answers to cognitive questions. This view was supported by educator Paulo Freire (cited in Berthoff, 1986) who conceived of education as a pedagogy of knowing. Central to Friere's pedagogy was the theme of active learning presented by Smith (1982). Students shared in the learning process and were empowered by a critical consciousness of themselves as meaning makers. Freire supported a position promulgated by Squire (1983) which suggested that it is language that provides the tool for meaning construction.

According to several reviews (Goodman & Goodman, 1983; Smith, 1982; Troyka, 1986), reading and writing are reciprocal acts, and one is diminished without orientation toward the other. Reading was seen as a process of seeking meaning in what is written; writing was the means by which reading came to be (Holt & Vacca, 1984). Smith (1982) stated, "Reading and writing are not mutually exclusive activities in

the brain and should not be in the classroom either" (Preface). Goodman and Goodman (1983) agreed with Smith that reading and writing are interdependent processes, necessary and beneficial to one another. Researchers Chall and Jacobs (1984) postulated that not only is writing important for itself, but "the strong relation of writing and reading and language suggests that the development of writing may also enhance reading and language" (p. 67).

Lucy Calkins (1983), also a writing researcher, pointed out the interdependence of reading and writing in her research in elementary schools. In her book Lessons From a Child (1983) Calkins stated that she intended to deal with the composing process of elementary writers, but could not realistically ignore the composing process of readers. Calkins reported in her research with Graves (1983), "There was no way I could watch writing without watching reading" (p. 153). Calkins calculated that some students spent as much as 30 percent of their writing time reading.

Reading and writing are part of the world of children. Most school language arts programs, however, do not help students develop a personal, functional need for being language users themselves. Too often in schools, the purpose of language is to satisfy an external demand and not an internal, expressive or communicative need (Goodman & Goodman, 1983). Wittrock (1983) posited that when students attributed learning to other people or to external factors, the efforts they invested declined. Graves (1983) suggested that to maximize student effort, students must assume ownership for their reading and writing processes.

Stotsky (1983) synthesized the empirical data that discussed the interrelatedness of reading and writing. A relationship between reading and writing was supported by a number of studies. For example, Lundsford (1978) found that remedial writers were also poor readers. In his pilot study of 92 students enrolled in remedial English at Ohio State, Lundsford correlated standardized reading scores, A.C.T. scores, a syntactic maturity measure, a writing sample, and a case study to support his conclusion that poor writers were also poor readers. Lundsford called for the reunion of reading and writing instruction in remedial classrooms. These findings were similar to those of Grobe and Grobe (1977) who found that reading skills were a correlate of writing ability in college freshmen. Grobe and Grobe sought to determine that reading and writing ability were systematically related and knowledge of one was a valid predictor of the other. The researchers sampled 186 college freshmen at Rutgers University to test their assumption that reading ability and writing ability were related. The researchers found a significant relationship between reading ability and writing ability in college freshmen.

In a longitudinal study beginning with kindergartners in 1963, Loban (1976) found similar results. Loban studied the stages of growth of children's language from kindergarten through grade 12. He began with 338 subjects in the Oakland, California, public school system and ended with 211 subjects who graduated from high schools in that district. Using annual oral interviews, written compositions, reading tests, IQ tests, listening tests, and teacher ratings, among

other measures, Loban found a strong positive correlation between speech, reading, writing, and listening. Students in the lowest and highest groups in writing fell into the respective low and high groups in reading.

The literature supported the interrelatedness of reading and writing. Students who read will also wrote well. As Loban (1976) discovered, a relationship clearly existed between reading and writing, and it became even more pronounced as students moved through the grades. These findings were not surprising if one acknowledged that necessary to all reading and writing is skill in processing language (Squire, 1983). A study by Applebee and Langer (1984) reported that children learned language in the process of using it in supportive contexts. With assistance and encouragement, children gradually made knowledge their own (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Purposeful interactions with language led to language proficiency. Teaching skills in relation to the whole unit of meaning allowed language learners to practice using language.

It was as Squire (1983) stated, "One does not learn to read by completing an endless series of discrete practices on isolated skills or learn to write by facing endless sequences of itty, bitty sentences and paragraphs" (p. 585). This position was echoed by Moffett and Wagner (1983) who stated that composition was not the sum of topic sentences, transitions and supporting details, and comprehension was not the sum of vocabulary words and inferences. The parts were not discrete and fixed, but were relative and interactive. According to Moffett and Wagner, reading and writing involved selecting,

abstracting, and questioning. Students needed one to bear on the other.

Moffett and Wagner posited that to compose is to comprehend. This was supported by Collins (1979) who found that adding a writing component to a remedial reading program significantly improved the reading comprehension of college freshman. Many teachers of composition have long known that the development of writing skills enhanced the development of reading skills. Fewer reading teachers have acknowledged the possibilities inherent in using writing activities for developing reading skills (Stotsky, 1983). One exception was reading teacher Marie Dionisio (1983) who implemented a composing process remedial reading program. Traditional remedial reading instruction was replaced with daily writing. Dionisio showed her students that writing caused them to read for a variety of purposes. Critical reading and writing skills were developed in personal and functional ways. Dionisio reported that the students became more able readers and writers.

Students who are reading and writing purposefully are engaged in making choices. Composing and comprehending involve the element of choosing. Rosenblatt (1983) stated, "Reading consists of a continuous stream of choices on the reader's part" (p. 124). Readers formulate expectations, speculate, predict, look forward, look backward, accept, and reject what they read as they interact with the author in a dynamic process (Hubbard, 1985). Writers do the same. They determine their purpose, point of view, audience, rhetorical stance, and an appropriate mode of discourse. Both readers and writers work as

craftsmen working their craft.

Gebhard (1983) posed the question, "Why should reading specialists teach writing?" Her argument for the inclusion of both components in successful reading and writing programs was based on the fact that both processes are language/thinking processes through which students learn and grow. Gebhard contended that an effective writing program is essential to any school reading program. She suggested several elements which are necessary for a successful writing program, including: real audiences for students to address; consequential writing tasks; and experience with a variety of modes of discourse. Research showed that in both the United States and in England writing for audiences beyond the teacher about self-selected topics rarely happened (United Kingdom, 1975; Applebee & Langer, 1984).

Britton (1975) and his colleagues investigated the writing developments of adolescents in the United Kingdom. The study showed that students wrote primarily for the teacher-as-examiner rather than for themselves, peers, or to the teacher as a reader, fellow-writer, or editor. The findings supported the work of Applebee (1981, 1984) and his colleagues who reported similar results. In a national study of writing at the secondary level, the researchers sought to describe problems students faced in learning to write and to assess the instruction in writing that secondary students received. The researchers concluded, "Students wrote too infrequently, engaged at best trivially in a composing process, and saw little point of relevance in any of the tasks they were asked to do" (Applebee, 1984, p. 170).

Missing in the majority of the writing was a reason for writing beyond meeting the requirements. The results indicated that students filled in the blanks with missing words and generally repeated material presented by the teacher rather than integrating information for themselves. Little writing occurred in the context of purposeful communication. Writing was used to assess previous learning rather than to explore new ideas.

The literature suggested that a similar situation existed in reading instruction. In 1981, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed that 85 percent of all 13-year-olds could correctly complete a multiple choice check on comprehension, but only 15 percent could write an acceptable sentence summarizing the paragraph read. The learners were not able to reconstruct the structure and meaning of ideas expressed by others.

Reading and writing are interdependent processes necessary to one another and beneficial to one another. Children learning language need to be reading and writing (Holt & Vacca, 1984). It is as Jensen (1984) stated,

> The function of both reading and writing is communication. Both processes require similar abilities, similar analysis and synthesis--comparing and contrasting, connecting and re-evaluating, and the same weighing and judging of ideas. (p. 4).

As senders of messages, we are composers; as receivers we are comprehenders, engaged in a communication process.

That language processes share common roots was clearly shown by Loban (1976) who found in his 13-year study of students' language development that children who excelled in one language process tended

to excel in others. Instruction in reading and writing has generally failed to focus on the processes that reading and writing share. It has failed to integrate in the following ways that Mofffett and Wagner (1983) described:

> The best way for the receiver to learn to comprehend is to compose. Communication is a game like any other in some respects. To play well you have to play all roles in it. You cannot be a good fielder in baseball if you are not also a base runner, because to know which teammate to throw the ball to you must know what the runner is most likely to do. This is why a good theory of language arts should make clear that composition and comprehension are equal and reciprocal. Chess players role-play each other in order to read each other's mind, and that is what readers and writers have to do. A learner needs to practice all roles and relations of the communication structure. (pp. 10-11)

Research in the last 10 years has contributed to the discussion of reading and writing as related processes. There have also been significant contributions by earlier theorists such as Vygotsky and Rosenblatt (cited in Jensen, 1984) who have argued for decades that we compose meaning, whether we are reading or writing, in order to create a coherent text from our discrete experiences, memories, and associations. The reviewed literature showed reading and writing were complementary processes; that "the more students used reading and writing together, the more they learned from them both" (Jensen, 1984, p. 4).

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